

# Section 2 – Psychology in its place

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*In 1996, Graham Richards published Putting Psychology in its Place: An introduction from a critical historical perspective. Here, I seek to consider what is or should be the 'place' of Psychology in education, more particularly Higher Education, and not just from a historical perspective. This raises issues about several contexts in which Psychology finds itself. In the Higher Education context itself, Psychology continues to be in demand. But what is offered in first degrees is largely dictated by the requirements of the Graduate Basis for Registration of the British Psychological Society. These have been criticised both as not ideal as professional preparation, and as being unsuited to the large majority of students who will not enter the restricted psychological professions. Little attention is paid to more general educational aims. In the context of other disciplines, Psychology (with some exceptions) largely fails to draw on other sources of knowledge about human behaviour, such as History and Anthropology, although there is increasing awareness of the importance of non-Western cultures. In a personal context, standard Psychology degrees include little on personal values and beliefs, or such approaches as Community, Transpersonal, or Positive Psychology. It is suggested that Psychology could and should be of greater value to both intending professionals and others, and ideally should be a component of the education of most if not all students. This is ultimately because the major problems the human race faces are almost all matters of human behaviour, and understanding this is vital to their solution.*

**I**N 1996, Graham Richards published *Putting Psychology in its Place*, subtitled *An Introduction from a Critical Historical Perspective*. I want to ask, what is or should be the 'place' of Psychology in education, Higher Education in particular, and not just from a historical perspective. As Richards stressed, Psychology, the discipline, is the reflexive 'human activity of studying human activity'. To adopt the Richards usage, Psychology (upper case P), the enquiry, is part of psychology (lower case p), the subject matter of that enquiry. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of other human sciences, including Anthropology, History and Sociology, but it is particularly apposite for Psychology since that is, as I see it, the study of individuals by individuals. I define disciplines not by their content or their methods, as many do (e.g. textbooks such as Hewstone, Fincham & Foster, 2005), but by what I term their focus (Radford, 1996, 2004, 2006). A *discipline*, on this view, is a set of problems that appear to be related, and the methodology and body of knowledge that

have resulted from their investigation. None of these features is fixed, nor does it have boundaries. It is meaningless to argue that any item is, or is not, 'really' Psychology, or Chemistry, or any other discipline. What matters is whether our understanding of the problems is advanced. Psychology as a teaching *subject*, in textbooks or syllabuses, can only ever be a selection from the discipline with the same name. Indeed it often includes material from other disciplines, for example, Genetics or Statistics. Whether these are taught as parts of the Psychology course, or as ancillary or minor subjects under their own label, is largely a matter of internal politics and convenience. There is also, very importantly, Psychology as a *profession*, a body of people with the usual characteristics of a profession, qualified, self-governing and so on (Radford, 2003a). A profession, unlike a discipline, is quite entitled to draw and defend boundaries, both for the protection of the public and for the welfare of its members.

## Psychology in Higher Education

The context within which any subject is taught is complex. First, student demand. There is currently a large demand for, and consequently supply of, Psychology as a subject. The British Council's website ([www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org), March, 2006) lists a total of 3377 courses in Psychology, from GCSE or equivalent to postgraduate. In 2007 A-level passes in Psychology were 52,048, behind English at 65,000, Mathematics at 60,000, and Biology and General Studies both at 56,000 (source: *The Times*, 17 August). In 2005 (the latest I have) there were 10,570 graduates in Psychology, below 20,085 in Business and Management, 15,930 in Information Technology, and 10,675 in Nursing (Prospects, 2007). The degree figures have to be taken cautiously, as there are considerable problems about how subjects are classified, particularly in an era of modules.

Then there is the function of Psychology in Higher Education. This is in turn only a subsection of the question, what is (Higher) Education for? The 'official' answer is quite clear. The website of the Department for Education and Skills ([www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk), May, 2007) states: *'Higher Education is the range of advanced courses available for those who wish to follow a professional career.'* That of the Department for Employment and Learning ([www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk), May, 2007) says: *'Higher Education means going to a University or College to study courses for qualifications like Degrees, Foundation Degrees, HND/HNCs, or Diplomas in Higher Education.'* Of research, scholarship, intellectual or personal development, contribution to the community, there is no mention. This answer corresponds fairly well, in fact, to what students, intending students, and their parents, say they want (Radford & Holdstock, 1993, 1997; I have not found later research). However, these groups also consider that universities should engage in research. The 'official' answer is also not unlike the original functions of (Western) universities, which were not, as is sometimes thought, religious foundations,

nor engaged in impractical speculation, as has been alleged. They provided a very practical preparation for life and particularly for the professions, specifically law, medicine and theology (Cobban, 1975). The first degree was intended as a basis for any career, and normally consisted of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, the first part being much the more important. It comprised grammar, rhetoric and dialectic. Grammar was Latin, the *lingua franca* of advanced education, scholarship, diplomacy and international business. Rhetoric was persuasive communication. Dialectic was logic and reasoning (Perkin, 1991; Radford, Raaheim et al., 1997; Scott, 2006).

The views of the Departments and the customers are essentially an operational aim for Higher Education. Students should be equipped and qualified to do certain jobs. Universities themselves tend to emphasise more general educational aims. Individual academics stress above all 'critical thinking' or the like, though they are not always able to say just what this is, still less how they develop it in their students (Radford & Holdstock, 1996). Universities almost universally have more or less high-flown 'mission statements'. Allen (1988) analysed some 2000 specific goals from such statements, into two main groups. One concerned the individual student – cognitive learning, emotional and moral development, practical competence; the other the needs of society – knowledge, the arts, discovery and development of new talent, and 'the university experience'. Such a duality can be found in the earliest known systems of higher education, in China and classical Greece. Numerous individual writers have offered specifications for Higher Education, usually far more idealistic than the Government view (e.g. Ortega y Gasset, 1946; Moberley, 1951). To quote just one:

*'...our concept of an educated person is of someone who is capable of delighting in a variety of pursuits and projects for their own sake and whose pursuit of them and general conduct of his life are transformed by some*

*degree of all-round understanding and sensitivity. Pursuing the practical is not necessarily a disqualification for being educated; for the practical need not be pursued under a purely instrumental aspect'*

(Peters, 1972).

We should also at least note that the British system of Higher Education is not the only one, and much that is taken for granted is in fact only one way of doing things. Many other countries, for example, depend extensively on private institutions as well as those of the state. Oxford and Cambridge were financially independent until the early 20th century. Some countries have even greater central control over the system than we do, others very much less, for example, in what is taught and how standards are maintained. Many have some form of 'binary' system, often with a distinction between the more vocational and the more academic. Our experiment with this was ended in 1992 when the then polytechnics were created universities, apparently in the interests of gaining greater central control over the whole. The US, in contrast, has a multi-layered system with a range of generally recognised different functions. Quite recently in the UK, a modular system has been grafted on to the existing one with no clear justification. Modules arose largely in the US for the practical reason of allowing students to mix work and study, as in the Open University here (Rothblatt, 1991). But we have retained the general pattern of full-time, single subject, continuous study.

### **The professional context**

The major, or modal, vehicle of Higher Education in Psychology is the Honours degree. This raises the professional context, because the yardstick for Honours degrees in Psychology is the Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR) of the British Psychological Society, which is the pre-requisite for a professional career. The Society currently (March, 2006) approves 395 degree courses, at 101 institutions. At any one time, some Honours degrees may not be approved, but

some students gain GBR by other routes, such as the Society's own Qualifying Examination. It is difficult to be exact about the numbers of Psychology graduates who eventually enter a psychological profession. Such a profession can be defined narrowly, as one for which training and/or qualifications approved by the Society are appropriate. These would generally be recognised by the status of Chartered Psychologist. Or more widely, as one in which psychological knowledge and skills are deployed to a major extent, for example in market research or in Higher Education. However, the Society itself, based on recent figures, states that approximately 10,000 graduates a year are eligible for GBR, and about 4000 of these take up the option. About 1000 go on to Chartered Status. Just under half, 46 per cent, of the Society's total membership currently have Chartered Status (information from the Society, June, 2007).

Formally, graduates are fitted for the psychological, or closely related, professions, or for training for them. A good many more without doubt find their psychological background of use, to a greater or less extent (Van Laar & Sherwood, 1995; partially updated 2004, personal communication). And no doubt some find it of little or no relevance. Clearly, however, the large majority of Psychology graduates do not require GBR. But there appears to be relatively little attempt to establish what they do need, or to provide specifically for them within the approved courses. I know of no published attempt to assess what graduates actually gain from their Psychology degree or how useful they do find it.

There is some ongoing work at the University of East London examining psychology students' perceptions of their experiences and the gains provided by their degree (Pawson et al., 2005). Pawson, Zook and Gottlieb (2006) have identified significant ethnic and gender differences in the perceived utility of the degree. Perhaps most pertinently, a sample of UK students perceived their psychology to be of less

utility and benefit on a number of dimensions (including career prospects) than did American psychology students. Of course there are many variables differentiating these two groups. And student perceptions are only part of the picture.

The GBR is based on the syllabus for the Society's Qualifying Examination. This is specified primarily in terms of content, and not unnaturally consists of what are considered the 'core' areas: cognitive, psychobiology, social, developmental, individual differences, conceptual and historical issues, research design and quantitative methods, plus three advanced options from educational, clinical, occupational, psychobiology, cognitive, social, developmental, health, and cultural. This is, as I have pointed out before (Radford, 1992) an example of the 'essentialist' approach to education, which may be contrasted with a pragmatic approach which is seen in American systems, and an encyclopaedist one in many European systems. Of course, these distinctions are not hard and fast. They are tendencies to prefer either a 'core' which somehow defines an education, or a selection on the criterion of usefulness, or an attempt at general, 'all-round' knowledge.

An examination (March, 2006) of the websites of the relevant Departments (or Schools, etc.) found 87 with sufficient detail to see broadly what is offered. All, as would be expected, cover the core areas, with a perhaps significant exception. History is specifically listed in only 14 cases, and theoretical or conceptual issues in 22. This is quite similar to the results found by Richards (2005), by means of a questionnaire to 99 Departments in 1999–2000. There is no reason, of course, why these topics cannot be dealt with under other headings, as appropriate. No doubt this is often done, and a good academic case can be made for it. The Society does not require a separate module. Nevertheless it is of note that these issues alone are treated in this way. Radford and Holdstock (1993) found them to be the least popular with students, and there may be a vicious circle of decline. Unpopular modules

attract fewer students, who justify fewer staff. Some Departments also offer courses/modules on topics not listed for GBR, sometimes as options. These include the psychology of religion (5), sport (3), music and the arts (2), the paranormal (2), and (1 each), love and attraction, everyday things, happiness, everyday life, poverty and race, co-operation and conflict, intimacy. There are three on psychoanalysis, and other titles such as psychology in question, psychology in context, science and psychology, career skills, or mind, body and spirit. This is not at all definitive, and departments often stress that courses may change. It is also the case that nearly all if not all first degrees are now modular, and students may often also take one or more from a wide range of non-psychological subjects. In addition there are rare institutions such as Cambridge and Keele in which degrees begin with a broad spectrum and specialise later.

The appropriateness of GBR for its primary purpose, that of entry to the professions, has been questioned. Gale (2002) pointed out that the psychology that students learn in their first degree may well be some years behind them by the time they even enter professional training, let alone practice. Content may change quite rapidly. More fundamentally, I have argued (Radford, 2004) that professional unity is not best attained by subject uniformity, and that professional standards rest, not on what students know when they start training, but on what they are qualified to do when they complete it, and on their understanding and acceptance of professional obligations and ways of working (including continued learning). And by definition GBR as such is not specifically relevant to those not entering psychological professions. One might suggest that the professional tail is wagging the teaching subject dog.

As to general educational aims, whether of the Peters or any other type, there is very little to indicate that Higher Education as a whole, or Psychology in particular, pays any attention to them, except in mission statements

### The employment context

Textbooks and websites frequently stress that Psychology will provide generally useful skills, such as literacy, numeracy, working with others, communication, and an appreciation of scientific method. There are also more formal specifications of the skills appropriate to psychology graduates. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2002), in a 'subject benchmark statement' for psychology, specified six 'defining principles' concerned with scientific understanding, multiple perspectives, real life applications, use of both empirical evidence and theory, research skills, and critical evaluation. These are elaborated in 10 subject skills, and 10 generic skills, the latter being such things as communication, use of data and of computers, teamwork, sensitivity and independence. An elaborate (48 pages) analysis of student employability comes from the Psychology Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy set up jointly with the Council for Industry and Higher Education (2004). Eight areas of skill, analogous to the QAA's generic skills, can be summarised as: analysis of behaviour and methodology, communication, data and information handling, team working, problem solving and reasoning, interpersonal skills and learning skills. Employers, for their part, are said to want cognitive skills and brainpower; generic, i.e. transferable, competencies; personal capabilities; technical ability; business and organisational awareness; and practical elements, i.e. in vocational qualifications.

None of these sources offer any data to support either the analysis or the extent to which either graduates or employers actually possess or put to use the criteria listed. Indeed it is tempting to suggest that they go little further than, and in some respects not as far as, the Seven-Point Plan of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in the early 1930s (Rawling, 1985). This proposed a basic framework for matching employees to employment, covering the areas of physical make-up, attainments,

general intelligence, special aptitudes, interests, disposition and circumstances. There is a long tradition of research into employment and employability, largely of psychological origin, and it might seem desirable that academic psychologists should draw more on this in respect of their own students.

The Higher Education Academy has promoted the concept of Personal Development Planning (PDP), in which students are encouraged to plan, record, and reflect on their academic progression and future employability (2007). A report by Edwards (2005) indicated that employers are much more impressed by the process of PDP than by any documentation that may result, in other words they welcome graduates who show evidence of thinking carefully about what they are doing. Psychology graduates ought, in principle, to be good at this.

Psychology graduates are said, by textbooks and Departmental websites, to be welcomed by employers. The only study I am aware of specifically on the views of employers towards psychology (Fletcher, Rose & Radford, 1991) was not very positive. It may now be out of date. Psychology graduates appeared to be largely viewed as 'good with people' in a rather vague way, but not particularly good at very much else. On the other hand, first destination figures are quite encouraging. Six months after graduating in 2005, in a sample of 80.7 per cent of the total of 206,965 graduates, the average percentage unemployed was 6.2 per cent, for all social sciences also 6.2 per cent, and for Psychology 6.0 per cent. The winners in the unemployment stakes are, not surprisingly, Medicine (0.2 per cent), Nursing (0.9 per cent) and Law (4.0 per cent). Losers were Arts and Humanities (6.9 per cent) (Prospects, 2007). These figures tell us nothing about the characteristics of the graduates, the supply of and demand for vacancies, or different patterns of career progression. There is also the fact that subjects vary greatly in direct vocational applicability. There are few professional historians, but many lawyers. Employed

graduates may or may not have found work appropriate to their particular degree, or indeed any degree. This may be a particular problem for Psychology, with its preponderance of female graduates (about 80 per cent, Prospects, 2007). The proportion of women in low-paid, non-graduate jobs has more than doubled in the last decade, according to research carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission (reported in *The Sunday Times*, 10 June, 2007).

### **The discipline context**

The Higher Education system within which Psychology finds itself, at least in the UK, is largely devoid of any rationale. It has developed haphazardly through a combination of changing values, political ideology, struggles for power, social and economic pressures and many other factors (Radford, 2003b). The practical mediaeval model was, for multiple reasons, largely lost in Britain, more especially England. The dominant mode became in the 19th century one of the general development of intellect and social conscience, which gave way to a view of research as the hallmark of university education. This largely remains, coupled with a dichotomy between 'pure' and 'applied', the former being considered somehow more intrinsic to 'real' education. More recently still, massive increases in student numbers (coupled with underfunding for them), and in central control and bureaucracy, have reduced academics, as has often been said, to 'workers in the knowledge factories' (Radford, 1997; Smyth, 1995). Now, perhaps, the status approaches that of slaves in the graduate mines. Current Government policy does include increased funding for research, but concentrated in a relatively small number of institutions (Brown, 2005). This is, in fact, a realistic policy, much as academics may dislike it. Many writers have pointed out that no system of mass higher education is or can be research based. There are simply not the resources available (e.g. Trow, 1989). But at the same time, academics largely depend on research for both advancement and personal satisfaction.

Academic psychologists, assuming they find the situation unsatisfactory, can do little about it in the short term. But it is possible to stand back now and then and consider some more of the contextual issues. Such consideration might even lead to novel and attractive educational developments. We have noted the relative lack of a historical perspective, despite its GBR cachet. To give just one example, it is common to find, in student answers and even in textbooks (Radford, 2005), an account of Freud that describes in some detail his developmental stages, explains that there is little evidence to support them, but adds that, in some mysterious way, he was very important. Nothing is said as to why he came to do what he did, how it affected psychology, or how it radically changed the way we look at ourselves. As Richards (1996) points out, a function of psychological history is to explicate the ways in which we have tried to understand ourselves, ways which are themselves part of our psychology. Further, it helps us to understand the situation we are now in, it guards against re-inventing the wheel, and it extends our sampling of behaviour. The conceptual and theoretical context is if anything even more important. Human behaviour is immensely complex, and Psychologists (and others) have adopted very various theoretical standpoints, assumptions, and modes of working, in the attempt to understand it (Peters, 1953; Radford, 1991). Effie Maclellan (2005), among others, has stressed the importance of conceptual, as opposed to merely factual, learning, in Higher Education generally. We have here some of the most essential ingredients of a psychological education in particular. Were I designing such an education, I should put them jointly first with methodology.

Then there is the context of other disciplines. Statistics has long been an essential component of Psychology degrees, and Genetics is increasingly so. But other approaches to human behaviour, such as Anthropology, History, Geography, Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, are relatively rare,

except as optional ancillaries or minors. It is perhaps particularly unfortunate that, after the promising start marked by the famous Torres Straits expedition of 1898, in which anthropologists, psychologists and physicians collaborated, Anthropology and Psychology drifted apart. There have been some not always fortunate exceptions, such as the vogue for Margaret Mead's dubious accounts of child development. General History seems to me as essential as history of the discipline, and for the same sort of reasons but on a broader scale. Then there are the Arts and Humanities, all of which add to our knowledge of ourselves (Rose & Radford, 1984). The only systematic attempt I have seen to consider this range of material is the three-volume *Psychology and its Allied Disciplines*, edited by Bornstein (1984). 'Interdisciplinary' research is in fashion, but raises many conceptual and practical problems (Radford, 2004; Strathern, 2006). At degree level, it is more a matter of offering rather wider perspectives. Experience suggests this is often welcomed by students.

This leads us to the cultural context of Psychology. It is increasingly recognised that Psychology as taught (and professionally practiced) is the product of one, Western, society (Marai, Haihuie & Kavanamur, 2005). Wolpert (2006) argues that there is no Eastern or Western science. In one sense this is true, but the subject matter of Psychology is peculiar in being both biological and cultural. We cannot dodge either heredity or environment. There are several issues. One is the value of understanding, as is increasingly being done, the 'Psychologies' of other societies, that is the way in which they have dealt with 'psychological' matters. The quotes indicate that there is no simple equation. As Richards has stressed in respect of the past, it is not legitimate to subsume what other societies do, under 'our' discipline labels. This in no way denigrates the massive increases in knowledge of 'our' Psychology, rather the aim is to produce a more broadly based discipline. Another issue is the social, economic and political context

of Psychology. Many authors have addressed this, e.g. Fox and Prilleltensky (1997), the more extreme claiming that Psychology as a whole is more or less a capitalist conspiracy. Without going so far, it is surely uncontroversial to point out that a great deal of the discipline and the profession have arisen in particular circumstances, which need to be understood. To take a simple example, intelligence testing began as an idea principally (not wholly) with Francis Galton's interest in different races and in Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection. It grew into a fundamental part of our culture from, first, the development of universal compulsory education. This brought into the schools, for the first time, many who struggled with what they were now required to do. Alfred Binet was asked to find a way to identify them. A little later, the entry of the US into the First World War similarly produced large numbers of new soldiers, often illiterate, or with poor or no English. Battalions of psychologists tested one-and-three-quarter millions by 1919 (Tuddenham, 1962). Wars, c o m p e t i t i v e business, government, social needs and so on, have all helped to shape Psychology, for better or worse. Jansz and van Drunen (2004) distinguish two broad views of Psychology in relation to society. The 'positivist' view is that Psychology is a good thing, scientific, progressive, value-free and beneficent in its applications. The 'revisionist' view is more varied, but includes the arguments that Psychology is not, and perhaps cannot be, scientific, or value-free. It is a servant to the powers that be, and its applications are not beneficent, as for example in creating and classifying mental illness out of a spectrum of normality, or supporting multinational corporations or military aggression. It arises from social forces rather than from disinterested research. The authors conclude that both views are too extreme, but that there is some truth in each.

### **The personal context**

Back in the days when some of us made a practice of interviewing every candidate for a Psychology degree, it was often felt to be a contraindication if he or she expressed a wish to 'understand themselves'. I believe I argued against this. It seemed to me a perfectly legitimate aim, though one that had to be tempered by a realistic view of what Psychology, as it was actually taught, constrained by syllabuses, could offer. Today, probably all degree courses include, at least, discussion of the ethical problems involved in psychological research and practice. But the issues are considerably wider. A discipline that seeks to understand, explain and perhaps modify human behaviour has moral issues built into it, as many have recognised. Applications of this are seen (for example) in the developing area of Community Psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Corporal punishment of children (for example) is an issue in which moral, ethical, religious, political and psychological issues are almost inextricably entangled, and there are many others.

Another large component of this context may be termed personal development. Of course there is a sense in which any learning must change the individual, one hopes positively. Several years of Higher Education should surely bring about some desirable consequences beyond mere formal qualifications, although as noted evidence is scanty (Radford, Raaheim & Wankowski, 1991). Anecdote and reminiscence are more plentiful, but notoriously subjective. However, there are those who feel that a prime role of Psychology, in particular, should be some form of personal development. This might range from the development of rationality (Moshman, 1990), to a wider understanding of oneself and others (to which the Personal Development Planning project would contribute), or even to something more akin to spiritual or even religious experiences. Such movements are collected together under the heading of 'Transpersonal Psychology' (Walsh, 2005). They range from

the experimental investigation of different states of consciousness to some forms of religious commitment. It is not necessary, however, to assume any supernatural dimension to sympathise with, for example, Rothberg's (2005) plea for an education that should enable the growth of spiritual, moral, and ethical, as well as merely technical, understanding; wisdom as well as knowledge. There is also the growing movement of 'Positive Psychology' (Seligman, 2002). This seeks to explore the contribution of Psychology to health and well-being, in contrast to the more traditional concern with problems and disorders of various kinds.

More modestly, I (and others) have suggested (e.g. Radford & Rose, 1980) that education in Psychology (and other subjects) needs to be organised in terms not only of content but also of what I termed skills and experiences. I suggested an analysis of content that was not inconsistent with that of GBR, though perhaps rather wider. I would now widen it further, to include, for example, psychology of the arts, spirituality and religion. As we have noted above, the importance of skills is increasingly recognised. The Department for Education and Skills was deliberately so named, and that for Employment and Learning stresses skill acquisition. I included, very briefly, professional interaction with others, measurement, experiment, the acquisition and organisation of knowledge, technical skills, and self-development. Experiences would include communication with others, tackling fundamental issues, intellectual exertion, developing personal independence, and understanding cultural identity. Many of these are perhaps not thought to be appropriate as specific aims of higher education, though they may be incidental benefits. But they may in the long term prove to be of the greatest importance to the individual. Research is needed to back up anecdotal evidence. I don't suggest that these, or any lists, are definitive. I do suggest that much is still neglected in education. And that all of this would seem to be pre-eminently the concern of Psychology.



### The values of Psychology

Higher Education, and Psychology within it, are subject to several related sets of opposing forces. I have mentioned the pure and applied dichotomy, and the pressures of teaching and research. Then there is the gap between (at least partly) research-oriented academics, pursuing a discipline out of both intellectual and career interest, and the increasingly mass production of graduates. There are the demands of society, or at least of government, as against the wishes of the individual. In a (more or less) democratic society there is bound to be tension. Students primarily choose subjects because they believe they will lead to satisfying careers (Radford & Holdstock, 1995). But those careers may not be available. Specifically, society does not 'need', or at any rate is unlikely to pay for, the 10,000 potential professional Psychologists who graduate. It may be that the increasing personal cost of Higher Education will have the predicted effect of students choosing paths that lead more directly and obviously to financially viable careers. There is another gap between the main aim of students, to qualify with reasonable prospects, and any wider notions of educational value, personal development and so on, that institutions may claim or theorists propound. This often means in practice a dichotomy between single Honours degrees or equivalent, and broader programmes. Yet another gap arises between the need of institutions, from economic necessity and bureaucratic demands, to take in large numbers, and the provision of all that academics like to think of as education, even in the sense of mastering the core aspects of a discipline. Evidence and experience show that good education is labour intensive (Radford, Raaheim & Wankowski, 1991). But even Oxford and Cambridge are finding it too expensive to offer traditional tutorials. Lewin, Mavers and Somekh (2003) point to the dominant politicisation of education, and a conflict between two current political objectives: education in the service of social equality and justice, and

education as market-based and determined. Academics themselves find they are between several rocks and hard places, and all too often lack the understanding, and certainly the influence, to do anything about it (Radford, 2003b). The 'place' of Psychology is, as with many subjects, a rather uncomfortable one in the midst of all this.

When I started my first degree in Psychology all but 50 years ago, one of the first things I heard was C.A. Mace quoting Abraham Maslow to the effect that *'If the world is to be saved at all, it will be saved by Psychology.'* Maslow is now claimed as, among other things, one of the progenitors of Transpersonal Psychology. His remark may seem pretentious or absurd. Yet it is really more apposite than ever. Most of the threats to human progress or even survival are, after all, from human behaviour itself, from global warming to AIDS, to over population, to wars, to famine, to totalitarianism and various sorts of extremism, and so on. Psychology is the discipline that seeks to understand human behaviour, and has already achieved very significant success. Most fundamentally, perhaps, it shows that behaviour can be understood by essentially the methods of science, far better than by the ancient means of authority, tradition, prejudice or faith. Donald Broadbent put it moderately but firmly in 1973:

*'We can tell nothing of our fellow men except by seeing what they do or say in particular circumstances... If we refuse to use observation and experiment on other human beings, we start to regard them as wicked or foolish. I think this is a serious danger, and I have no doubt that the methods of empirical psychology are socially more hygienic, or to use the older and more robust phrase, morally better.'*

As a character says in *Vanity Fair*, 'Them's my sentiments!' And it does not seem too absurd to hope that the many thousands who each year take a fairly substantial course in Psychology (degrees, A-level, GCSE, teacher training, etc.) may provide some leavening in a general population of around 60 million. One is constantly struck by a seem-

ingly widespread incomprehension, even among otherwise well-educated people, of such psychological basics as individual differences, distribution of traits, cultural variation, probability, and so on. James Flynn (2007) has argued that the observed increases in intelligence scores over the last century are related to a spread of 'scientific' thinking, broadly defined. Psychology may well be a factor.

The question arises, whether all these conflicting interests can be reconciled, and what place Psychology, as a subject, can find amid such various contexts. David Rose and I (Radford & Rose, 1989) argued for Psychology as 'a liberal science', combining the power of science with the humanity of other ways of understanding our behaviour (also see McGovern et al., 1991). I have also argued (e.g. Radford, Raaheim et al., 1997) for considering the function of education as developing what I termed *responsible autonomy*. This might be expanded as the ability to make and carry out one's own decisions, always having regard to the welfare of others. I use the word 'function' rather than, for example, 'aim', advisedly. Education is necessarily an interactive process, and means cannot be separated from ends. To become a philosopher you have to wrestle with the issues, in public or private. You can't learn to swim by reading a book on the way to the baths. Sport is a good analogy. Success needs potential, motivation, practice, coaching. It's also worthwhile – enjoyable, healthy – even if success is small. Autonomy and responsibility develop through their practice, with guidance. Exploring one's potential, extending it, using it wisely and for the good of oneself and others, are what I consider, not very originally but with conviction, that education is, or should fundamentally, be about. And Psychology, our attempt to understand ourselves and others, is a prime means for this, both by its nature and in numerous specific applications. (Among many illustrations that might be given is work on *self-regulation*, reviewed by Webb, 2006.)

At Higher Education level, responsible autonomy becomes professionalism. There is no precise definition of this, but there are frequently cited characteristics, which include: formal and intellectual training and qualification, based on a shared body of established knowledge, both practical and theoretical; a commitment to acting in the best interests of the client; acceptance of codes of conduct, enforceable when necessary; exclusion of the unqualified; accountability for what is achieved (or fails to be achieved), rather than for specific actions; responsible, independent work without direct supervision; and autonomy and self-regulation of the profession itself (Radford, 2003a). These should be characteristic of academics themselves in Higher Education, though they are rapidly being eroded. They should also characterise the professionally qualified persons those academics educate. And, *mutatis mutandis*, they should increasingly inform all students as they progress from nursery school to whatever level they finally attain. Nursery school? Yes. Good teachers at any level will find nothing odd about codes of conduct or respect for others as part of what they hope to achieve.

## Conclusion

The place of Psychology in Higher Education I see as first, a main vehicle for a first degree. I would wish it to be considerably wider than the present rather constrained GBR model. This might be advanced in practical terms by the Society specifying that one or more options should be taken, outside the present syllabus but demonstrably relevant to it. Another possibility might be a unit called *Psychology in Context*, or the like, dealing specifically with some of the issues mentioned above. Indeed there is a case for a unit simply on 'Psychology'. There is a case for the old-fashioned 'long essay', or a mini-dissertation, not highly specialised like a project, but requiring integration of knowledge from various sources. There is room for any or all of these, since the Qualifying Examination syllabus is not intended to

constitute the whole of a three-year course. More radically, the structure of the GBR could be re-thought, with less emphasis on content and more on principles, skills, experience and context. Should it be based on an 'essentialist' core, or rather on a pragmatic choice of what would be useful; or even on a more wholistic, 'encyclopaedist' approach, or on some combination of these? Even more radically, the whole GBR concept might be questioned. The relationship of the Society to Higher Education has been debated for most of the last hundred years, sometimes acrimoniously. We have yet to find a perfect balance between academic freedom and professional necessity. Both these have value but also danger. Freedom can become inertia, and professionalism can be mere protectionism. The Society must ensure that its practitioners are competent. But as I have said, this is a matter of output, not input. It does not follow that the content of basic courses should be prescribed, particularly when these are some years away from the professional qualification.

Then, next, there is Psychology for the many who will not become professional psychologists. They greatly strengthen the case for recognisable and acceptable Psychology degrees which might venture into some of the various other contexts I have mentioned. 'Psychology' would be, as F.C. Bartlett put it, an enquiry into 'the conditions of human behaviour' (Crampton, 1978), with all that that might entail. In particular such degrees might try to offer what would be of greatest use in the widest range of careers, and indeed lives. I would suggest that this might start, not from the 'content' of Psychology as seen in current textbooks, but from a consideration of what students will actually do in later life. In the most general terms, they will almost all train for a job and work at it, but also have partners and children, probably care for parents, be subject to political and commercial persuasion, function at least to some extent as citizens, engage in leisure pursuits, seek happiness and fulfillment, face old age and

death, and form some sort of philosophy or view of life, perhaps not fully articulated. To all of these Psychology is highly relevant. More so, one might claim, than any other discipline. In all of them a more objective, empirical approach, and appropriate knowledge, are better than other ways. Then at the next level, the question should be asked as to what specific psychological skills and knowledge are valuable for particular modes of employment, both as professional psychologists and in any other capacity (perhaps along lines such as those developed by J.L. Holland, 1997). And further, how far graduates actually possess these attributes, and how they may best be acquired. It is odd that psychologists, of all professionals, have not got very far in applying their very appropriate skills and expertise to their own education and training. It should be for the Society, if anyone, to propose and support systematic programmes of research. The Society's Charter requires it to promote Psychology for the good of society, presumably not merely in a narrow professional sense. Such research should not fail to examine what other cultures do and have done in Higher Education.

Such research could inform the Psychology major for all, but especially those who do not intend to, or cannot, enter the restricted professions. For my part I would also ideally see Psychology as *part* of education for all students, at schools, colleges and universities. In the last, it could probably only be done by some modern version of the mediaeval *trivium* and *quadrivium*. There is a case for a first year of truly general education, including something of the physical, social and behavioural sciences, the arts, and the humanities. That is unlikely to come about in this country in present circumstances. At post-16 level, there is a case for something more like the International Baccalaureate, with its broader coverage of disciplines and its excellent 'Theory of Knowledge' syllabus (the 'encyclopaedist' view shows through). However, it has proved very difficult to introduce even the modest

widening set out in the *Curriculum 2000* programme (Priestley, 2003), just as it was to introduce one new A-level subject, Psychology, the first 120 candidates for which sat in 1970.

I remain convinced of the already great, and potentially greater, value of Psychology, as a discipline, a profession and a subject. But to maximise this it is necessary to stand back

and consider it in its various contexts, to see as it were the wood for the trees. And then develop a programme of sustainable forestry.

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